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Watermelon Nutrition Facts

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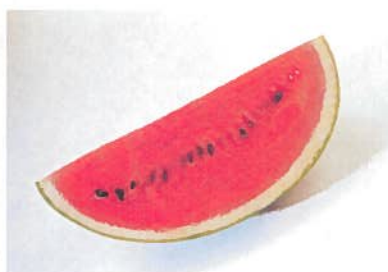
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Watermelon is not only great on a hot summer day, this delectable thirst-quencher may also help quench the inflammation that contributes to conditions like asthma, arteriosclerosis, diabetes, colon cancer, and arthritis. It's being touted as so healthful it should be stored in your medicine chest. DietPower.com has declared watermelon one of "The 10 Best Foods."

Sweet, juicy watermelon is packed with some of the most important antioxidants in nature. It is an excellent source of vitamin C, and is also a very good source of vitamin A, notably through its concentration of beta-carotene. These powerful antioxidants travel through the body neutralizing free radicals.

Free radicals are substances in the body that can cause a great deal of damage. They are able to oxidize cholesterol, making it stick to blood vessel walls, where it can lead to heart attack or stroke. They can add to the severity of asthma attacks by causing airways to clamp down and close. They can increase the inflammation that occurs in osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis and cause most of the joint damage that occurs in these conditions, and they can damage cells lining the colon, turning them into cancer cells. Fortunately, vitamin C and beta-carotene are very good at getting rid of these harmful molecules and can therefore prevent the damage they would

otherwise cause. As a matter of fact, high intakes of vitamin C and beta-carotene have been shown in a number of scientific studies to reduce the risk of heart disease, reduce the airway spasm that occurs in asthma, reduce the risk of colon cancer, and alleviate some of the symptoms of osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis. A cup of watermelon provides 24.3% of the RDA for vitamin C, and, through its beta-carotene, 11.1% of the RDA for vitamin A.

Watermelon is also a very concentrated source of the carotenoid lycopene. Recent research shows watermelon contains more lycopene than any other fresh fruit or vegetable, even tomatoes. Lycopene is well known for its ability to lower the risk of many different kinds of cancer, especially cancers of the prostate, lung, and stomach. Data are also suggestive of a benefit for cancers of the pancreas, colon and rectum, esophagus, oral cavity, breast, and cervix.

Watermelon is also a very good source of vitamin B6 and a good source of vitamin B1, potassium and magnesium.

A watermelon's delectable flesh has no cholesterol and virtually no fat (almost none of which is saturated) — a stellar accomplishment for a food often served as a dessert at picnics. A whole cup of watermelon contains only 48 calories.

Once you have the melon home, it will keep at room temperature for two to three weeks. After you've cut into it, however, it needs to go in the fridge.

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